

**THE ARRIVAL OF JOY**  
**Sermon Series: Advent — The Arrival Of . . .**  
**Next Steps Devotional Guide; Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 1:18-2:11**  
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1. The word Advent comes from the Latin, which means “waiting for the arrival of a person, or an event or a thing.” The early church applied this to the arrival of the Christ Child and the Second Coming of Christ. What is something you have longed and waited for the arrival? When it arrived, what was your experience?
2. Read Jesus’ words in John 15:11. What brings you joy?
3. Read Galatians 5:22-23 from your sermon notes. Joy is not something you can produce. Only the Holy Spirit can produce it in a genuine Christian. This means you can be joyful even in the middle of grief and some depressing situation. Has this ever been your experience? If so, when?
4. Read the definition of joy in your sermon outline. This definition stresses that joy is the quiet confidence that ultimately everything will be all right because God is in control. When are you most vulnerable to not believe God is in control and why?
5. The Christmas story has 3 “grinches” who attempt to steal our joy. The first “grinch” is found under point #A under the heading, “*Three Grinches Who Attempt To Steal Joy Out of Our Lives.*” The first “grinch” implies that distress is the opposite of delight.
  - (a) If you have seen the movie, The Grinch Who Stole Christmas, why do you think this animated story lasts and what does it have to say about joy?
  - (b) If you are a parent, if your 13 or 14-year-old daughter told you she was pregnant and the pregnancy had been caused by God, what would be your reaction and why?
  - (c) Mary went from one stressful situation to another. First, was the angel’s announcement to her that God was going to make her pregnant. Then, within a few days of giving birth, she had to ride on a donkey for 4-5 days for 80 miles to get to Bethlehem. Then, once there, no hotel or inn was available. She had to give birth in a stinking stable. Then, she had no midwife or her mother there to assist her with the birth. Then, she was told this baby boy is the Son of God and so she was going to raise the perfect child. That’s why in the first story of Christmas, the word afraid is used seven times. If this had been you (if you are a guy, your girlfriend), would you say joy would have been your experience or some other emotion? Why?
6. To keep the first “grinch” called from stealing your joy, you must trust God and accept His plan no matter what. Yet, trust can only be built on truth. Without truth, there is no trust. Violated truth kills trust.
  - (a) Read Luke 1:26-30 from your sermon outline under point #1. If an angel appeared to you and informed you that God had chosen you for a specific purpose, what would be your initial reaction and why?
  - (b) Read Luke 1:31-33 from your sermon outline under point #1. If you were responsible to raise the Son of God, the Messiah, the Savior of the world, what would you feel and why?
  - (c) Read Luke 1:34-37 from your sermon outline under point #1. When Mary’s question “how,” was this a normal reaction or an indicator of doubt? Why?
  - (d) What are you anxious about this Christmas?
  - (e) Read Luke 1:38 from your sermon outline under point #1. How in the world do you think this very young teenage girl was able to say this and why? If this were you, would this have been your response? Why or why not?
  - (f) Read Luke 1:47 from your sermon notes under point #1. When you lose joy, what is it you turn to to fill that void and why?
7. There is a second “grinch” that attempts to steal our joy under point #B. Everyone has been wounded by someone. Sometimes it is unintentional and sometimes it is intentional.
  - (a) Is there any hurt you have carried from your childhood or teen years with you into adulthood? If so, what was that hurt and how is it impacting your life today?
  - (b) Have you ever been around someone who got hurt, betrayed and they carried that hurt with them their entire life — to the point they are angry, bitter and resentful? What was it like to be around them?
  - (c) Joseph feels betrayed. His parents signed a legal and binding contract with Mary’s parents to officially begin the one year betrothal (kiddushin) and then the eventual marriage (chuppah). The dowry price (called in Hebrew, the Mohar) was paid by Joseph’s parents to Mary’s parents. This pregnancy is embarrassing and humiliating to both families and especially to Joseph. Up to this point in the story, Joseph is in the dark. No angel has told him anything. If you had been Joseph, what would you have done and why?
8. When someone hurts us, our initial reaction is to hurt them back. Settle the score. Get even. Joseph chose not to retaliate, not to seek revenge, not to humiliate and embarrass Mary for this shocking pregnancy.
  - (a) Read Matthew 1:18-19 from your sermon notes under point #2. This young teen boy named Joseph is a “godly man who always did what was right and he did not want to shame Mary” the Bible says. What person in your life has hurt you more than anybody else? Are you still holding on to that hurt? If so, why?
  - (b) Hurt that you hold on to only hurts you. The longer you hold on to hurt the deeper it is going to continually hurt you. Holding on to hurt does not help you get even; it only helps you become more enraged. While you are getting more and more enraged and bitter, that person is eating a Krispy Kreme doughnut and going on with their life. You cannot succeed with resentment, bitterness and anger. Why?

- (c) Read Matthew 1:20-21 from your sermon notes under point #2. The angel Gabriel eventually speaks to Joseph in a dream while he slept on his decision to quietly divorce Mary. You're Joseph, now what are you thinking based on what the angel Ga?
  - (d) In both appearances, Gabriel tells Mary and Joseph to name the baby boy Jesus. Read the explanation for the meaning of the name of Jesus in your sermon notes. Joseph is about to be the step-father to the Son of God, the Messiah, and the Savior of the world. And because he accepted God's purpose for his life, he does not get bitter. Rather, he gets blessed. When it comes to hurt in your life, God will give you the choice to either be bitter or blessed based on whether or not you give grace, let it go and do what God wants. Read Nehemiah 8:10 from your sermon notes under point #2. Does this describe you? How or why not?
9. Most people do not have a clue as to what God's purpose is for their life. They are born, live and die never doing it. *Philippians 2:13* says, "*God is always at work in you to motivate you to be willing and able to obey His own purpose for your life*" (PAR). This is why we have no excuse for not discovering it and then doing it. The result of failing to do God's personal and individualized purpose for your life gives a third "grinch" an opportunity to steal your joy. That "grinch" is found under point #C. Read Jesus words in Mark 3:25 from your sermon notes under point #C. Do Jesus' words describe you in any way? If so, how?
- (a) Read Matthew 2:1-2 from your sermon notes under point #3. This passage describes four stages of spiritual growth: followed, seeking, find and worship. What stage would you say you are currently and why?
  - (b) Read the explanation for the Greek word translated as "wise men" or "magi." Magi were primarily mixed breed Jews who studied mathematics, science, astrology, medicine, the occult, and religion. Some were interpreters of dreams, priests, teachers, soothsayers, astronomers, astrologers, medicine men, and some practiced the occult. But all of them had one thing in common: they were all monotheistic. Magi lived in Persia (modern Iran) today. They have traveled approximate 1,251 miles. This is in an age where it was either all by foot or by camel. This is in an age where there no Motel 6s along with the way with the light left on as Tom Bodett says in the commercials. If they pushed it to get 20 miles/day, you're looking at 62-63 days. Most scholars say it was probably 70-90 days. So, you are looking at 2-3 months. Why do you think they did this?
  - (c) Read Matthew 2:3-4 from your sermon outline under point #3. When they get to Jerusalem, they informed King Herod. He is jealous and feels threatened, though he hides his true feelings and intentions. The gifts the magi brought are not for him because he is not the king they seek. King Herod is no dummy. He calls for the best Old Testament scholars to research the prophecies about the Messiah stop learn where the Messiah would be born. Have you ever been angry, hid your true feelings in order to do something wrong? Explain.
  - (d) Read Matthew 2:5-8 from your sermon notes under point #3. The magi learn they are in the wrong city. It's not Jerusalem, but Bethlehem — some 80 miles away. We are looking at another week of travel for the magi. We know that Herod's intentions were not to worship this new-born Messiah, but to assassinate him (ex., Matthew 2:12-18). God warned the magi not to return to Herod and he is furious. It is horrible that Herod murdered and slaughter innocent baby boys.
    - (i) Any time you seek out Jesus and give your life to Jesus, it is going to upset some people. Has this ever happened to you? If so, when, why, and how did you react?
    - (ii) The magi traveled a total of 1,330 miles (ex., 1,251 from Persian to Jerusalem and 80 miles more from Jerusalem to Bethlehem). How far are you willing to go to seek, follow, find and worship Jesus Christ?
    - (iii) What are you willing to invest in time, money, and energy to get to know and grow in your relationship with Jesus Christ?
  - (e) Read Matthew 2:9-10 from your sermon notes under point #3. Now read the explanation for the words explained as "*unrestrained joy*." Does this describe you? If yes, how? If not, why not?
  - (f) God does not give us a "map" to guide us. As with the magi, God gives us a guiding light. Why do you think we want the map more than the light? Now read the two reasons as to why God will never give you a map for your life in your sermon notes under point #3. God has given you a compass (the Bible) and a guiding light (the Holy Spirit). Read Psalm 119:105 from your sermon notes under point 3. The more you get into the Word of God, the more light the Holy Spirit will shine for you to know where to go and what decisions to make and how to make them. Are you willing to do this?
10. Read Matthew 2:11 from your sermon notes under point #3. When was the last time you knelt down and really worshipped Jesus?
11. Read the two things that happened when you personally encounter Jesus under point #3. In what way is this you or is not you?
12. Read Luke 2:10b-11 and Psalm 51:12a from your sermon notes under point #3. What are these passages saying to you and why?
- (a) Read Luke 1:39-45 from your Bible. Notice that it was the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy with John the Baptizer. The Bible says John (the forerunner of the Messiah) "leaped with joy" in the womb upon hearing the news about Mary's pregnancy with Jesus, the Messiah. How is that possible and do you believe it?
  - (b) Mary stays with her cousin Elizabeth and her husband Zachariah until John the Baptizer is born — an another 3 months — and then she returned to her own parents' home. Why do you think Mary did this?
  - (c) Read Luke 1:46-55 from your Bible. Mary expresses what is called "Mary's Song of Praise: The Magnificat." What does this say to you about how Mary was able to have joy in spite of the 3 "grinches" Joseph and she were facing? How could you?
  - (d) What would you say to someone who feels a "Grinch" has stolen their joy?

